

NC State Board of Education Response to S.L. 2009-451, 7.19

**Submitted to Education Cabinet
March 1, 2010**

Introduction

Section 7.19 of S.L. 2009-451 requires that “the State Board of Education [SBE], with the cooperation and assistance of the North Carolina Community College System [NCCCS] and the University of North Carolina [UNC], shall collaboratively develop and systematically determine the technical specifications and data standards for a PreK-20 data system to centralize student data collected about students enrolled in prekindergarten programs through doctoral programs.” Section 7.19 further requires that “Standards and specifications shall conform to the guidelines and instructions governing any funds received through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act [ARRA] of 2009 for this purpose” and directs that “standards and specifications shall be submitted to the Education Cabinet no later than March 1, 2010.”

This report responds to the requirements of Section 7.19 by addressing each of the provision’s subsections in the order in which they appear in the legislation.

Response to Requirements

1. **Subsection (a).** “The State Board of Education, with the cooperation and assistance of the North Carolina Community College System and The University of North Carolina, shall collaboratively develop and systematically determine the technical specifications and data standards for a PreK-20 data system to centralize student data collected about students enrolled in prekindergarten programs through doctoral programs. The PreK-20 data system shall build upon the current capacity, programs, and initiatives of the State Board of Education, the North Carolina Community College System, and The University of North Carolina.”

SBE Response: Since mid-2008, a committee composed of representatives from the NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), NCCCS, UNC, the NC Independent Colleges and Universities (NCICU), and the NC Early Childhood Data Group (NCECDG) has been meeting to explore options for building a joint data system that connects all NC education sectors. The NC Employment Security Commission (NCESC) joined the group in early 2009 to represent the workforce end of the education-workforce continuum. In September 2009, the Education Cabinet officially endorsed this group as the “NC P20+ Steering Committee” and sanctioned the group to create and submit the State’s proposal to the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) State Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) grant program, funded through the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. NCDPI, as lead fiscal agent for the proposed grant, submitted this application (see attachment A) on behalf of the NC P20+ group on December 2, 2009. The application contains the group’s collaborative high level vision for an NC P20+ SLDS, referred to as “NC P20+.” The vision clearly builds upon the existing capacities, programs, and initiatives of the NC P20+ group members, and proposes specific goals, measurable outcomes, and timelines for making the vision a reality (see attachment B, pp.6-17). The NC P20+ group will begin to develop detailed project requirements and implementation schedules

once the extent of IES SLDS grant funding is known (notification of award status is anticipated in May 2010).

2. **Subsection (a).** “The State Board of Education, in collaboration with the North Carolina Community College System and The University of North Carolina, shall also develop a strategy for tracking students for five years after they complete their education at a North Carolina public educational institution.”

SBE Response: The NC P20+ proposal centers on use of a Statewide unique student identifier (UID) that will be adopted and stored by each of the NC P20+ sectors. This identifier will enable tracking of individual students as they move from the State’s early childhood programs to elementary and secondary schools to institutions of higher education and/or into the NC workforce. As noted in the grant proposal, the NC P20+ Steering Committee has already agreed to build upon the operational P-13 UID that the SBE has established through the NC Common Education Data Analysis & Reporting System (CEDARS) Project.

3. **Subsection (a).** “The General Assembly urges private colleges and universities to advise and assist the State Board of Education, the North Carolina Community College System, and The University of North Carolina on the implementation of this section.”

SBE Response: See response to #1, above. NCICU has been an integral member of the NC P20+ Steering Committee and contributor to the development of the NC P20+ grant proposal.

4. **Subsection (b).** “The PreK-20 data standards and specifications shall include:
 - (1) The types and forms of data to be included in a PreK-20 data system, including longitudinal data and the use of a unique student identifier;
 - (2) The capacity of a shared PreK-20 data system;
 - (3) The degree and extent of cooperation between a shared PreK-20 data system and the current data collection systems of the State Board of Education, the North Carolina Community College System, and The University of North Carolina;
 - (4) The minimum capacity and technical specifications needed for each data system to feed into a shared PreK-20 data system;
 - (5) The ability for data in a shared PreK-20 data system to be understood and used by interested stakeholders, including federal and other State agencies; and
 - (6) The feasibility of broadening the PreK-20 data system to include other sources of data that are needed for a unified statewide data collection system.”

SBE Response: Per the response to question #1, above, the NC P20+ grant proposal (see attachment B) provides a clear direction for standards and high level specifications for a “PK-20” SLDS in NC, as follows:

- (1) In addition to use of a UID (see response #2, above), NC P20+ will include various types of individual record-level data including data related to

enrollment, demographics, program participation, coursework, assessments, and degree attainment. Staff data (P-13) will include qualifications and courses taught; the system will facilitate linkage of teacher and student performance data. Workforce data may include wages and/or type of employment.

- (2) Section II (pp. 6-12) describes the five key goals and sixteen measurable outcomes for NC P20+. Collectively, these deliverables define an aligned, robust data system that would include formal, Statewide, collaborative governance, and technology infrastructure that would enhance accessibility, quality, interoperability, and use of “shared” data needed both for sector-specific and Statewide, cross-sector analyses.
- (3) Section 2.3.1 (p.10) and 2.3.2 (p.10-12) describe, respectively, plans to enhance each sector’s data collections systems and to establish common infrastructure to ensure that each sector can contribute data sets that meet defined, consensus standards for content and form and are linkable across the education workforce continuum for a given student;
- (4) Section 2.3.1 (p.10) provides for efforts to enhance each sector’s data collection systems to ensure that each sector can contribute high quality, linkable data to the P20+ data system. This work entails different activities in each sector. The range of work includes modifying existing source systems to have better automated point-of-entry controls, migrating source systems from older, less flexible technologies to newer, more flexible ones, and establishing central data collection systems to better organize and modernize variable, distributed data collection. Additional detail related to each sector’s anticipated work is available in the attached Budget Narrative (see attachment C, pp. 40-51)
- (5) Sections 1.2.2 and 1.3 (pp. 4-5) and section 4.3 (pp.21-22) discuss plans for ensuring that NC P20+ produces information that is of value to key stakeholders. To make meaningful analysis and information products more feasible, reliable, and valid, NC P20+ will first improve both data accessibility and quality across the sectors. At the same time, the NC P20+ Steering Committee will engage stakeholders early and often to determine what information products are most valuable and ensure that NC P20+ is designed to support their creation and use. This work includes clarifying the questions that the system needs to be prepared to answer and ensuring that the required data is included in NC P20+. The Steering Committee will also assess various data consumers’ capabilities to use different types of information products or artifacts, and coordinate with other State initiatives, such as Race to the Top (RTTT), that are working to increase education leaders’ capability to conduct data-driven decision making that fosters continuous system improvement and, ultimately, increased student achievement.
- (6) Section 2.3.2 (p.12) describes how NC P20+ is designed to be expandable; that is, capable of adding additional data sources, potentially from other State agencies that collect record-level data associated with programs and services

delivered to students. While particular technology architecture (other than the UID system already in place) will not be specified until the detailed planning and design activities that will occur post grant-award, the proposal design requires that whatever architecture is chosen must facilitate future expansion of the system.

5. **Subsection (c).** “Standards and specifications shall conform to the guidelines and instructions governing any funds received through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 for this purpose.”

SBE Response: See response to #1, above. The NC P20+ proposal conforms very specifically to the guidelines and instructions governing any funds received through the ARRA SLDS grant program. Table 2.2 (pp.8-9) details the relationship between NC P20+ project outcomes and the mandatory system capabilities and elements specified by the America COMPETES Act. Furthermore, as described in section 3.2 of the grant application (see attachment B, p. 13), in section (c)(2) of the Race to the Top (RttT) application (see <http://racetothetop.nc.gov/about/application.pdf>), and in section (b)(1) of the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) Phase II application (see <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/arra/sfsf/reporting/collection>), NC P20+ represents a single, coordinated effort to comply with the ARRA SLDS requirements.